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BROWNBACK STATEMENT ON STEM CELL RESEARCH

WASHINGTON – As host of a Capitol Hill forum on stem cell research today, U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback released the following statement.

“We are here today to discuss some of the issues that have been raised regarding federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research.

“Congress outlawed federal funding for harmful embryo research in 1996 and has maintained that prohibition ever since. The ban is broad-based and specific; funds cannot be used for ‘research in which a human embryo or embryos are destroyed, discarded or knowingly subjected to risk of injury or death’. The intent of Congress is clear – if a research project requires the destruction of human embryos no federal funds should be used for that project.

“On December 2, 1999, the National Institutes of Health published guidelines in the federal register on ‘human pluripotent stem cell research’. Yet, despite their title, the NIH guidelines do not regulate stem cell research. Rather, they regulate the means by which researchers may obtain and destroy live human embryos in order to receive federal funds for subsequent stem cell research. Clearly, the destruction of human beings is an integral part of the contemplated research, in violation of the law.

“The embryonic stem cell research being proposed by the NIH is illegal, immoral and unnecessary. There are legitimate areas of research which are showing more promise than embryonic stem cell research and which do not create moral and ethical difficulties.

“In the past, Congress has continually increased funding for NIH. New advances in adult stem cell research, being reported almost weekly, show much more promise than destructive embryo research. It seems obvious that we should focus our attention on legitimate research not the illegal, immoral and unnecessary research being proposed by the Administration.

“Clearly we must continue to fight to help cure disease and to alleviate suffering. However, it is never acceptable to deliberately kill one innocent human being in order to help another. A government that uses utilitarian reasoning to justify exploiting one person for the good of another undermines the rights of all its citizens and compromises its commitment to equal justice for all. The responsible choice is for government to serve human life in ways that do not destroy life,” Brownback said.

Participants in the conference include patients, patient advocates, medical school professors and ethicists on the important advances being made in the area of adult stem cell research.